Reduction in fare of Palace on Wheels

277. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the fare of Palace on Wheels, the luxury train, has been reduced recently;

(b) if so, the percentage of reduction therein;

(c) when this reduced fare became effective;

(d) whether this reduction has attracted more tourists; and

(e) the occupancy position before and after reduction in fares?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) A discount of 25% of peak season tariff for the foreign tourists and a special tariff of Rs. 10,000/- per night per person for the Indian tourists have been given for the current season.

(c) The reduced fare has become effective from 2nd January, 2002.

(d) Yes, Sir.

(e) The occupancy has gone up from 21% to 45% during the period.

Rail link to Karnataka cities

278. SHRIMATI BIMBA RAIKAR: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that many new rail lines, connecting major cities of Karnataka with neighbouring States, were approved in the past budgets, but very meagre amount was allocated for the work;

(b) if so, whether Government have any time-frame for completion of these projects; and

(c) if so, the details of such projects and the reasons for very less allocation of amount to these projects?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL): (a) There are two new rail line projects in progess connecting

cities of Karnataka with neighbouring States. The projects are Bangalore - Satyamangalam and Munirabad-Mehboobnagar.

(b) and (c) The works on these projects are being progressed as per availability of resources. No target date has yet been fixed for these projects.

USA grants to Indian Railways

279. SHRI RUMANDLA RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the United States of America has agreed to grant four lakh dollars to the Indian Railways for further development of its Geographic Information System-based strategic investment planning techniques;

(b) if so, whether any agreement in this regard was signed by Government with the United States;

(c) if so, the main feature of this agreement;

(d) to what extent it would help the Railways; and

(e) by when these grants are likely to be utilised by the Railways?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) the main feature of this agreement is that United States Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) will partly fund as a grant, the further development of the Geographical Information System (GIS) based strategic investment planning techniques as a part of the existing Long Range Decision Support System (LRDSS) of the Indian Railways.

(d) Out of the total project cost of US $ 1.03 million dollars, United States Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) is providing US $ 400,000 as a grant. The remaining portion of the project cost will be funded by the Ministry of Railways.

(e) The project is likely to be completed in a period of eighteen months